

WASHINGTON, D.C. - On Wednesday morning, Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) continued his aggressive questioning of federal officials who are involved in aerial spraying of the Central Coast's light brown apple moth.

"For the past two months I have questioned several Department of Agriculture officials on how they are handling the light brown apple moth," Rep. Farr said following the hearing. "So far, the answers I have received have been incomplete and inadequate. We must determine whether this spraying is harmful to humans and we must determine whether spraying is even necessary."

Testimony focused on Bruce Knight, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. During questioning, Under Secretary Knight promised Rep. Farr that he would revisit the decision that led to the moth being labeled a dangerous pest and review whether the designation is proper. Under Secretary Knight also said he would review federal policies surrounding the strategy of aerial spraying on the Central Coast.

This hearing followed another round of questioning in February with Department of Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer. During that hearing, Rep. Farr requested that Secretary Schafer develop a partnership between the USDA and agencies that have the capabilities to evaluate the effects of spraying, including the U.S. Surgeon General.

"The bureaucracy that led to the moth being labeled a dangerous pest is unclear," Rep. Farr said following the hearing. "If we don't even know why the moth is listed as a dangerous pest, it's impossible to determine how far we must go to control it or whether the current emergency eradication tactics are justified. I have asked Secretary Schafer and Under Secretary Knight to better explain the steps they are taking to ensure the safety of the public, and I am awaiting their response."

During Wednesday's hearing, Rep. Farr asked Under Secretary Knight if he could explain how and when the moth was originally "blacklisted" and whether a pest with that label has ever been recategorized. Secretary Knight assured Rep. Farr he would provide answers to those questions.

"I will continue to work with local, state and federal officials and agriculture experts in an effort to keep the public safe," Rep. Farr said. "It's vital that we get to the bottom of these questions, and I will continue to lean on the USDA to provide us the answers we deserve."

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